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Our Union—God's Gift.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN

TRINITY CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C.

ON

THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1850.

BY

THE REV. C. M. BUTLER, D. D., RECTOR.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., *November 29, 1850.*

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR:—Having heard, with exceeding satisfaction, the eloquent, pious, and patriotic Thanksgiving Address, delivered by you yesterday, we express but the general wish of your auditors, that you will please furnish a copy for publication, believing, under the peculiar circumstances of the country, its general dissemination could not but have a highly beneficial effect upon the community at large.

Most sincerely, your obedient servants,

J. BARTRAM NORTH,
A. H. LAWRENCE,
AARON LEGGETT,
H. P. JOHNSON,
E. L. CHILDS,
W. M. MORRISON,
FITZHUGH COYLE,

Rev. C. M. BUTLER, D. D., *Washington, D. C.*

WASHINGTON, D. C., *December 3, 1850.*

GENTLEMEN:—I yield my Thanksgiving Discourse to your request, with the regret that I should have been compelled to treat so great a topic with a rapid pen; and with a misgiving that your interest in its subject has led you to overestimate its value. As, however, the demand for its publication has been repeatedly made to me, since the receipt of your letter, I do not feel at liberty to withhold it from the press.

Very faithfully, your obedient servant,

C. M. BUTLER.

MESSRS. J. H. NORTH, A. H. LAWRENCE, &c.

DISCOURSE.

THE name which this day bears indicates our theme. "Thanksgiving for National blessings" is the name of the day; and National blessings are the subject of our discourse.

NATIONAL BLESSINGS! They are as large as the land we occupy. They are as varied as its climes, and soils, and products. Yet, with all their variety, they have, as a whole, the same individuality as the broad continent over which they are spread.

Since the last Thanksgiving-day, our country has stretched itself from sea to sea. An American citizen may pass, East and West, four thousand miles, and see the sun rise over and set behind no hills that are not his. The sun greets us with his morning salutation from the Atlantic, and breathes over us his farewell evening benediction from the Pacific. "It is a good land and a large."

The very extent of our land—the occupation of a country so gigantic by one race, of one origin and tongue; and their union under one system of free government and just law, like that under whose shelter we are thriving, is itself a subject for vast thanksgiving.

It is a new thing in the history of the world. Great Empires, in past times, have been composed of diverse people, whose races, histories, languages, institutions, arts, sciences, and general culture, have been most various and conflicting. They have been *conglomerates*, fused into a

shapeless and heterogeneous mass by the fires of despotism. The style in which those vast Empires were addressed was this—"Nebuchadnezzar the King, unto all *people, nations, and languages.*" Such were the Assyrian and the Babylonian Empires. Such was the dominion of Alexander. Such the Roman Empire. Such the Kingdoms of Charlemagne and of the Saracens. Such is the character of the present British Empire. Never before was there a land so vast as ours, under one government, inhabited by one people, speaking one language, and subject to one law. It is a new thing in the history of the world.

And it is a thing which it required a long history to accomplish. God preserved this continent from being inhabited, until, in another land, men were gradually trained to begin the work which is here and now in progress. Long and dreary was the road, slow and difficult the advance, to those principles of religious and civil freedom, which, under God's blessing, our Fathers reached; and whose adoption in this new land, on this large unoccupied field, have made us what we are.

At the time of the Reformation gross darkness rested on the people. They were ignorant alike of their real religious and political rights and duties. But when light is let into a human soul, it will not shine, at a monarch's bidding, on a single point, and leave all others in their olden darkness. Its direct rays may be gathered there; but its diffused brightness will illumine all the building. Henry would let one broad beam of light into the minds of his people that they might see beneath it the monstrousness of the Pope's claim to spiritual supremacy. Many saw it, and saw, moreover, by the same light, the equal monstrousness of his own assumptions. And now when one thoughtful and brave spirit after another began

to discern and proclaim their wrongs and rights—when the vague yearnings and dim questionings of oppressed generations, worked themselves out at last into clear consciousness, and definite conviction, and firm resolve—when those claims to the God-given and inalienable rights of men and nations which were but muttered under Elizabeth, and spoken with “bated breath” under James, rang out with clarion clearness in the startled ear of Charles—then the creatures of power began to arrange the stupidities of traditional despotism into a system. The slavish scheme of kingly government by divine right was then matured by the sycophantic divines and statesmen of the days of the Stuarts. Salmasius, on the Continent, Sir Robert Filmer and the Non-Juring Bishops and Divines, in England, were its principal supporters. They claim that in direct descent from the grey Patriarchs of the world, kings inherit an absolute, unbounded, irresponsible authority; and that passive, unquestioning obedience to these delegates of Heaven, is but true loyalty to God. Greater slavishness of spirit than that which could devise such a scheme, it is difficult to conceive. It may become a duty to bow in *practical submission* to an absolute authority. But that men should elevate such authority into the venerable seat of law; that they should see in *mere power* an overawing augustness to inspire their reverence; that they should waft towards such a shrine the incense of their praise; that they should hail this vile Herod of despotism as a God, because his golden armor of prosperity and power, glitters in the sunlight—all this surely shows the abjectness of man, and proves that Satan spoke a mocking lie when he declared, “Ye shall be as Gods.”

These views were confuted, with superfluous power and logic, by Milton, and Locke, and Sidney. In the place of

it another and more liberal system was substituted. They sought to find an ultimate ground for the authority of governors and the rights and duties of the governed in a supposed *social compact*. Men were contemplated as in a state of nature, each man standing alone, and having certain rights, and all agreeing to enter into organized society, and to give up a certain portion of their rights for the sake of the security and the advantages which a governed community provides. By this supposed compact the extent of the prerogatives of the magistrate, and the immunities of the citizen were to be determined. This theory, though it involves some just principles of government, has many and great defects. It has no historical basis. It is a mere theory, having never been realized in the known life of any nation. It is not *written down*, like "*Magna Charta*," and "*The bill of rights*." Like what is called natural religion, it depends on what each man finds his own mind to say upon the subject; and therefore its principles are fluctuating and uncertain. It furnishes no fixed and sure basis for such a practical administration of government as shall give men just law and regulated liberty. The speculative politicians of the Revolution of 1688 endeavored to shape their practical reforms, and to take their enlarged liberties, from this then favorite scheme of political philosophy. But at a later period the reforms that have been urged and the ameliorations which have been effected in the British Constitution, have been based upon a principle which was obtained from us—which was born in this Western World—the great, new, true, imperishable principle, *the right of men, under God, to govern themselves*—the right of living men to say that they themselves will determine the constitution and laws under which they will live. The men of England, of whom we speak, said to

each other, "let us find out from the conditions of the social compact what are our rights and duties." But our Fathers said, "Come, brothers, let us decide what *we* shall do—what *we*, free men, shall adopt, as our constitution, and our law."

And this brings me towards the point at which I would have you pause in admiration of the over-ruling Providence of God. From the midst of the despotic theories and practical oppressions of the mother land, came a body of colonists to our shores, who were, for the most part, earnest and religious men, whose resistance and hatred of man's tyranny, were coupled with a most absolute loyalty of spirit to God's rule, to duty, and to conscience. Here it was, in our colonies, that the great principle of which I have spoken—the *right of men to govern themselves*—was born and grew. It was a lesson in advance of those learned by their liberal brethren in the mother land. They reached it by virtue of the more quickened and independent thought which their position favored; and no less by the peculiarities of their colonial condition, by which they were enabled, and sometimes obliged, to realize the principle in their practice. This principle it was, which lay beneath the rallying cry of the Revolution—"No taxation without representation." This principle was embodied in every State Constitution, and in the Articles of the Confederation. It constitutes the introductory sentence of our present Constitution. It is the first political lisp of our children. It is the last and grandest conclusion of the high speculations of our statesmen. It is the rule of all legislation. It is the test of all measures. And, as all things, good and true, are most apt to be abused, it is brought forward to cover and consecrate all wild, disorganizing, and selfish schemes, which would sub-

stitute the individual for the collective will, and self-license without law, for self-government by law.

On this day of National Thanksgiving, when our recent enlargement as a nation, and our present peculiar condition invite us to the theme, we call your attention to

I.

The character of the fundamental principle of our Government; to

II.

The wonderful Providence of God by which it has been enabled "to spread undivided" and "operate unspent" over a country so vast and varied; and to

III.

The great advantage to themselves and to the world, of the Union under one system of free government and law, of one great people, inhabiting one great land, whose main boundaries are oceans, and which includes within itself all the climates of the world.

I.

It is needful, even in our own land, to vindicate the fundamental principle of our Constitution—the right of self-government. It has of late, in Europe, and at home, been associated with so many Godless theories, such evil passions, and such disorganizing measures, that it is important to rescue it from misuse and misunderstanding.

1. As adopted and understood by our fathers, this principle did not involve the idea that man owes obedience but to *self*; and that *self* is the ultimate ground and reason and law of his responsibility. The term "*self-government*" has

been thus sometimes misinterpreted, and sometimes misrepresented. It has been thought to be a kind of impiety that man, the creature of God, should talk of the right of governing himself. It was not, however, a throwing off of allegiance to all authority but that of his own reason and will and conscience, that this term intended to express. The claim was not in opposition to the just authority of God, but to the groundless, usurped, and tyrannical authority of man.

2. Nay, the principle as it was given to us by our fathers, and as we should hold it, might be rather named the *duty* than the *right* of self-government. First of all the men in whose souls this truth was born, recognized the duty of *absolute obedience to God*. Nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of their duty to Him. Then it must be their right, aye, and their duty, to disown allegiance to any government and law which prohibits them from doing their duty to Him; it must be their right and their duty to govern themselves in such a way as that they may be obedient to the government of God. Such was the spirit in which this great truth originated. It was not in a spirit of lawlessness and wilfulness, and of reference to self as the ultimate ground of all rights and duties; but it was in a spirit of devoted loyalty to law—the highest law which can govern a moral and responsible creature—that the principle of self-government was born.

3. Nor is this principle to be sneered into contempt by the assertion that it involves a want of infelt and practical reverence for law—that it robs law of its sanctity and makes it level with the mere obligation of a bargain. On the contrary, to the laws which self-governing men enact for themselves, and for their own government, there are sanctions of peculiar dignity and power. The sneer pro-

ceeds on the supposition that laws made for men by a power above them, in which they have no share, will secure an homage and reverence which they cannot feel for constitutions and enactments which proceed from themselves. Let us see. Take some despotic Monarchy. The law comes down to the people from the strong palaces of power. It is flashed in their eye from the gleaming points of myriad bayonets and swords. It is thundered in their ear by the artillery and the drum. I know that for ages, down-trodden men have gazed with stupid awe on this array of power, and bowed with deep submission before its awful mandates. But what sort of reverence is this to law? It is the craven stoop of the spirit before mere power! It is a government which is *outside* of the soul, and does not fix itself in the innermost convictions of the mind, the true homage of the conscience, and the warm affections of the heart. But when a great people thus enact—"we in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution"—when this enactment comes from a nation of whom I am one, then I hear a voice of law which sounds to my soul like the majestic echo of the voice of God. It does not appeal to my fears. It does not crush my spirit into abjectness by the rod of power. But I acknowledge it as an obligation which I personally have assumed; a real duty which I recognize and feel; a grand privilege which I enjoy. Now here is reverence for law, the only reverence which deserves the name. The principle of obedience has seated itself within the soul. It grasps the conscience. It sways the whole

moral nature. The grandest homage, that of intelligent conscious moral obedience, is rendered to the law.

4. Nor is the true principle of self-government *irreligious* in itself, or in its tendency. Some good men have been led to fear, from its abuses, that it is a proud and Godless scheme, which cannot be reconciled with the principles of the Word of God. It will be an evil thing alike for God's truth and Church, and for the Republic, if such a sentiment widely prevail among pious men. It is heard sometimes in conversation, though seldom seen in print. But if it prevail, it will array the State against the Church as adverse to freedom. It will make the Church regard the State as based on principles hostile to the progress of the gospel. Better, far, that it should be cordially recognized as a principle perfectly consistent with the religion of the Savior. Better that it should be rescued from false glosses, and shown to be a system into which the religious mind may throw itself with unhesitating earnestness.

Surely it may do so. Surely this system, rightly viewed, is every way favorable to religion. We have seen that it was the work of religious men. We see that it guarantees the absolute liberty of every soul to serve and worship God according to its own convictions. Nor does it make meaningless, as some have supposed, those many Scriptures which declare to us that the powers which be, are ordained of God; that we should be subject to governors and powers for the Lord's sake; and that those who resist the power, resist the ordinance of God. There is a harmony between these two truths, viz: that men have a right to form for themselves a government, and yet, that government is the ordinance of God, and obedience to its laws, obedience to him. That harmony should be plainly shown and fully recognized. We should not allow ourselves to

stand in doubt whether our whole system of government is an organized revolt against the authority of Heaven. Government *is* an ordinance of God. It is his will that men should exist in organized and governed society. Civil society, therefore, is as clearly a divine institution as is the family. But the particular *form* which organized society shall assume, is not prescribed by God. He has not fixed it by divine command, in the form of a Monarchy, an Oligarchy, or a Republic. The form of government is the ordinance of man. Government itself is the ordinance of God. Now, we have no reason to doubt but that that form of government which best secures the rights and happiness of man is, in his regard, the most acceptable and best. Yet he himself has set us the example, in his dealings with the Jews, in granting them a King, of allowing a government to be established, which was not, in itself, the best, or the most acceptable to Him, but the best which the then condition of people would enable them to enjoy. So that Divinity belongs to the State and not to the form of the State. To us, then, as Republicans, who have framed our own system of government, belong all these declarations which aver that government is the ordinance of God, and that obedience to its commands, is obedience to Him. We can take them and obey them in all the fullness and sacredness of their meaning. As the family relation is divine, and the duties connected with it the subjects of divine command, so is the State from God, and allegiance to it is obedience to Him. And in this view, patriotism and devotion to our free Constitution receive sanction and obtain sacredness from the Word of God.

5. The result then is that this great principle is the "last word" of political science. It is the latest and best birth of time. It is that ultimate truth in government towards

which all efforts for freedom—all partial emancipations from tyranny have tended, but have never reached. It is a lesson in advance of any learned in the struggles for freedom in our mother-land. It is in its own nature grounded on supreme loyalty to God. It is not without law, but creative of law. It includes highest and truest reverence for the law which it creates. It is consistent with and it is a principle through which may be expressed a deep and true religiousness of spirit. Favored indeed is the land in which such a principle is vital, and practical, and pervading. That it originated and lives here, is a proof of a degree of national advancement, in that which constitutes true progress, beyond that of all other nations of the earth. Under it prosperity must spring, human rights be best guarded, the human powers best developed, and human happiness most widely spread. Then is human nature developed to its loftiest stature, and best proportion, and most real strength, when it is placed under the influence of the Gospel and the grace of God, in a system of government where man's liberty is held as his birth-right, and loyalty to the State is acknowledged as his own conscious moral duty to just laws, framed by himself, *in obedience to the moral laws that bind him as a creature of God*. Laws when thus framed are elevated from the rank of "ordinances of man," which they are in their form, to "ordinances of God," which they are in their essence and their obligations.

II.

And now let me call your attention to the wonderful providence of God by which this principle, unknown in the old world, and for which the old world was unprepared, was made to grow up and spread over this broad land.

1. Our first train of remark, in this connection, would naturally be that which we have already made in tracing this great idea of constitutional self-government. We saw how men were prepared in England by its history to come to this country with a strong sense of their rights and wrongs; and how their circumstances in this wild land, favored the growth of the great political truth on the prevalence of which the future civil and social progress and happiness of the race depends. How can we fail to see in that series of events the hand of God! There was no country in Europe in which this great principle could have worked itself out into practice for centuries to come. This is proved by the history of the Commonwealth of England, which ran, immediately and inevitably, into a one-will despotism. Therefore, the men who had advanced farthest towards this principle were transplanted to a new and almost unoccupied continent. How wonderfully did God keep this great land, far off in the ocean, from being discovered and occupied, until he had prepared men to take it in possession. And when they were placed here, how did God, by the force of the circumstances in which they were placed, teach them to lay hold of the great truth of man's right and duty, under God, of framing the laws to which he should be subject! The lesson was, as it were, forced upon him. He learned it, we may say, by having first been compelled to practice it. The colonial legislatures, familiar with the wants of the colonies, too distant from the seat of power to be overawed by its authority, or to rely habitually upon its counsel and direction, learned the right of self-government by its practice, rather than by any speculations on its justice anterior to its enjoyment. Thus did God's providence train the men of the colonial days for that unequalled display of political

wisdom and sagacity which was developed previous to, and during, and subsequent to, the Revolution.

2. Nor in this thing alone has God shown himself to be with us as our guide and teacher. He was with our Fathers in the formation of our present Constitution. If God was ever visibly in history it was surely when our Fathers fixed upon our present form of government. The union of many independent States, under one General Government, is the most marked peculiarity of our political condition. It is as new, as a mode of union of States, as is the principle of the right of self-government for the single State. It is a wonderful and strange arrangement. It is considered by all thoughtful and philosophic minds, at home and abroad, that have studied and understand it, as the masterpiece of political wisdom. It will be, we believe, the admiration of the world for centuries to come, whether it shall be realized in other theatres, or limited to our own. It reconciles apparent contradictions. It realizes seemingly conflicting results, in that it leaves each of the States in their separate political rights and organizations, while it binds them all in one general government, which is as effective for all good purposes, as if it were a consolidated nationality; and as favorable to all the real rights and liberties of the States, as if it were but a loose league of sovereignties. The commentaries on this feature of the Constitution, of some of the ablest minds under whose counsels it was adopted, are regarded as the most golden sayings of our masters of political sentences. It is this feature of our government which enables it to stretch itself from sea to sea, without gathering dangerous strength at the centre, or exhibiting as dangerous weakness, by its weight, at the circumference. It is a system of wheels within wheels; but, like the mystic structure of Ezekiel,

they are all informed by one spirit, and the various inner play of the separate wheels is carried on beneath a great and all-embracing wheel, and all of the combined parts move on in the same direction.

3. But if ever men were led by the hand of Providence and taught, step by step, what next to do, it was the men who framed this Government—a Government in which, when they constructed it, they discerned much wisdom, but in which there were more and greater excellencies than they could see. There was no political Jupiter, out of whose brain this Minerva sprang, full grown. Read the history of it and you will see how unconsciously, beyond their own purposes or expectations, were men led on to its adoption. First, a few men from different States met to talk of trade, and separated with the idea of a united nationality. And when the Convention was formed, how singularly did obstacles to union, seemingly the most insuperable, give way! How did God smooth the way for the adoption of article after article, of that grand charter of our national liberty and law! And what is most remarkable and instructive to observe is, that great as were the wisdom, sagacity, and foresight of the framers of that immortal instrument, they were not possessed of it all when they began their discussion, but they were taught much of it, day by day, and lesson by lesson, here a little and there a little, as the debates progressed. They were forced into many of their measures which have proved the wisest, by the stress of the providential circumstances in which they were placed. They did not at once adopt them, because they saw the wisdom of them; but they saw the wisdom of them after they were forced to adopt them. The existing state of things set them on the search for some principles and measures, which but for that state of things, they might

never have adopted. It is evident, then, that our Constitution was not a *manufacture*, but a *growth*. It was not *made*, but it *became*.

4. In reference to this very feature of the relation of the separate States to the General Government, which is now regarded as the crowning excellence of the Constitution, was the interposition of God most singularly manifested. The facts have been often detailed, and therefore, a general reference to them will suffice. On the question, I believe, of the representation of the States in the Senate, the Convention came to a pause. Agreement on the subject seemed impossible. The whole plan of Union seemed to be on the verge of ruin. States threatened to withdraw. Under circumstances of great excitement and alarm, the venerable Franklin counselled an adjournment for some days, and recommended that when they again assembled, their deliberations should be opened with prayer. It was done. The dissenting States, at the re-opening of the Convention, agreed to the measure they had so strenuously resisted, rather than that the Union should not be formed. Thus against the preferences of many, even of a majority, and after the acknowledgment that they were at their wits end, and a resort to God in prayer, was that feature of the Union perfected, which is now regarded, with scarcely no dissenting voices, as its crowning excellence and wisdom. Say not that God was not there! Say not that this came altogether from the wisdom of our fathers! Rather let us, on this day of National Thanksgiving, gratefully confess that then the Lord of Hosts was with us, the God of Jacob was our refuge.

III.

And now having vindicated the character of our fundamental principle of government, and shown its truth, its moral elevation, its religious value, and its influence on national progress and elevation, and having noticed the wonderful providence of God in having provided a birth-place, a home, and a theatre for the extension of this ameliorating principle, embodied in political institutions of singular wisdom and great practical excellence; let me direct your attention to some of the great advantages to themselves and to the world, of the Union, under one system of government and law, of a people of almost entirely one race and tongue, inhabiting one wide and wondrous land. I say to *some* of those advantages, for they are greater and more numerous than I can describe or know.

1. Well did the Father of his Country say, that "the unity of government which constitutes us one people is a main pillar in the edifice of our real *independence*." Our real independence depends not only upon our power to preserve our rights; but it is great and real in proportion to the absence of necessity to use that power. If I, standing alone, have just power enough to defend myself from an enemy, and am yet compelled to use it *all*, I may say that I am independent of him—and it will be, in one sense, true. But if I am in union with a band of men, so that my enemy would not molest me, nor call upon me to exert my own power or that of my confederates, then would my independence be more complete and real. The former state of safety, on condition of constant vigilance and exertion, could scarcely, with propriety, be called real independence. So it would be with States, if they stood alone. Their independence, singly, could not be so absolute as their independence is when united.

2. And how vastly is the prosperity of all the States increased by Union under one government! The *material interests* of the country are thus incalculably subserved. In a greater variety of ways than can occur to my mind—from the interchange of the products of the various portions of the country with no commercial restrictions—from the common use of every improvement and invention in the sciences and arts—from a uniform system of customs, and taxes, and in a thousand other ways, the wealth and prosperity of each section of the country will be prodigiously increased. The best and most convincing commentary on this head would be a history of the Confederation. And let it be remembered that, in proportion to a country's prosperity, will be the number who can secure the leisure and means of education, and of general culture and improvement.

3. In Union lies our best security for *peace*. Foreign wars are for us henceforth, happily, almost an impossibility. But if, instead of one broad fraternal united government, we were divided into many States, how difficult it would be, with inevitable jealousies, diverse interests, mutual reproaches—how difficult to preserve peace! Nay, how impossible! And the manifold and fearful evils of this state of things I need not attempt to portray. How it would retard industry, check education, destroy religion, consume the resources of the country, multiply swarms of idle and greedy officials, corrupt the morals, and destroy the prosperity of every State, yourselves at once can see. When Israel and Judah separated, each State maintained an army double the number previously maintained by both united; and from that period each kingdom was engaged in destructive wars, and both hastened, with rival speed, to ruin. However it may have been with us in times past,

it is certain that with our present seemingly conflicting interests—only seemingly and temporarily conflicting, we believe—our condition, without union, would be one of active war, or of armed and suspicious truce. And war between the different portions of this Confederacy would be one of the most saddening and dismal pages of the history of this earth. Never were a people so interwoven by the nearest and tenderest relationships as we are over all this broad Continent. It would send a personal sorrow into every household. It would gather a vast national woe over all the Continent. It would set loose wild ruin to stride and trample, with ferocious footsteps, over all the fair fields and peaceful dwellings of the land. And in that warfare there would fall more illustrious victims than ever before strewed a battle-field. There would fall such a national prosperity and happiness as the sun never shown upon before. There would fall, shrieking, the hopes of the millions of struggling victims of oppression in every land. There would fall the fair and venerable forms of liberty, justice, security, morality, and religion, and over their unhonored graves military despotisms would flaunt their bloody banners, and lead on their abject myrmidons to new contests and still desolating victories. Oh, what an unspeakable gift it is from God, that this day, through the immense length and breadth of our land, we can gather in our houses of prayer, and praise him as a united people! What devout thanksgivings do we owe to him—oh, God, give us grace to render it!—that we are still the UNITED States!

4. But even if it were possible to avoid these woes if disunited, yet by the Union of this great land, under one system of government, what increased diffusion is given to education—how truth flies from point to point—how the

discovery of one becomes the property of all—how the large fields and the magnificent rewards opened to genius and perseverance stimulate the faculties to their highest exercise! How, too, under such a state of things, do the ordinary and narrow local prejudices and feelings which are the growth of peculiar and prescriptive institutions based on no fixed principles of law and justice—prejudices which retard the discovery of truth—how do these, under such circumstances, give way! There is no reason in seeming interest, or in self-defence, why we should uphold any false principles in government, in morals, and in science. What a field is opened here for the spread of truth and the developement of mind! All great truths and principles are free to perambulate the land. We know that not only nations separated by a mountain chain “abhor each other,” but that systems of philosophy, morality, and science, separated by no greater distance, abhor each other too, and are in bitter conflict. “Three degrees of latitude,” says Pascal, “upset all the principles of Jurisprudence.” Not only does such a Union foster education because, by securing peace, it gives the means and opportunity for its enjoyment, but because it diffuses just principles over all the land; it breaks up prejudices; it will not let errors lurk and work in corners, but drags them out and makes them speak and vindicate themselves before a great and sagacious tribunal. The false systems that might have continued to parade and impose themselves on little cliques and communities, are not allowed to remain there, but are placed, by the press, upon a conspicuous stand, where all the nation can see and hear them, and are there made to give an account of themselves; and are questioned and cross-questioned, so that all may judge whether they are true or false. Never before was there a country so favor-

able for the discovery and spread of true principles on every subject of practical concernment or theoretical speculation.

5. And this leads me to remark, that such a broad, various country, united into one, is calculated to develop the general national character into a largeness and strength which it could not otherwise attain. It would seem that in such a country, narrowness of mind could not be a national characteristic. The wise Ulysses was the wiser for having seen so many men and many lands. And vast numbers of our citizens, keeping within the bounds of their own country, have equalled Ulysses in his wanderings, if not in his wisdom. This constant interchange of views with men of different minds and of different culture—this personal insight into things, which often show us that they are neither so bad nor so good as we supposed—all these advantages must give breadth and liberality to character. And I think he must be greatly prejudiced, who will not grant this to be a national characteristic. Old bed-ridden notions and prejudices which turn and groan and fret and die, on the minds of men who are in contracted spheres, cannot be allowed to lie long on the restless minds of the citizens of a Republic such as ours. We are called in derision, sometimes, the “universal nation;” and there is a truth and an unintended compliment, too, in the sneer. The great and philosophic author of “*Spirit of the Laws*,” has a striking and beautiful speculation on the effect which the natural character of a country has on the character of a people; and he illustrates it, if I remember rightly, by the effeminacy and the impassioned fire of the Oriental, the strong, stern energy of the Roman, the beautiful and varied genius of the Greek, and the free, brave spirit of the mountain Switzer. Now, if there be truth, as there is

beauty in these speculations—which I think cannot be doubted—then is the land in which we are placed, calculated to foster a national character of ample width and of just proportions and of real strength. It is a land including within itself the peculiarities of all other lands. The intermingling of families and of whole neighborhoods, east and west, and north and south, diffuses the national characteristics, and blends some of the elements of each into almost every individual. A *composite* of character is thus gradually formed, which furnishes us with as many fine specimens of man as, we believe, this world can show. We believe that nowhere else can so many balanced, wise, liberal, well proportioned characters be found, as “in our own land.” And never have we been so convinced of it as of late. The difficulties through which our country recently has passed, have developed an amount and quality of patriotism and true greatness, for which we may be permitted to be grateful, if we may not be proud. And it has developed itself in opposition to seeming interest and in the midst of threatening clamors. The public men of a Republic like our own, may well be regarded as true representatives of its general character. And in every part of this great united Confederacy, they have shown a grandeur of patriotism and a largeness of spirit which would seem to verify the speculations of Montesquieu, and to show that they were bred to their magnificent proportions by the sounding and spreading oceans, by the everlasting hills, and by the vast illimitable wilderness of our glorious land. They have risen, north and south, east and west, and sent forth words of majesty and power, and by the most solemn oaths of religious patriotism, have sworn that no one shall take any part of their one great country from their hearts; that no sacreligious hand should remove from them the

tomb of Washington, the fields of Bunker Hill, of Yorktown, of Saratoga, and all the consecrated spots of our nation's history. They have shown us that, in the wide sweep of their affections, the whole of what constitutes their country is contained; that there every mountain rises, every river runs, every green savannah spreads. Oh, who does not feel that he would become a dwarfed and a meaner thing, if he were not permitted to call all this fair heritage "*my country*," and to say when he perused or listened to the descriptions of her magnificent lakes, her winding rivers, her awful mountains, her golden hills, her waving fields, and her teeming marts, "this is *my own*, my native land."

6. My friends, I avow it as the object of all these remarks, to make you love and prize your institutions, your Government, and *all your country*. I think it is the duty of every minister of God on this day, and at this crisis, to do the same. I might, on suitable occasions, speak of our country's danger and her sins; but now I would speak only of her glories and her capabilities for progress and usefulness, that you may renew to her your vows of loyalty and love. What,—and I speak with the full recollection that I am a minister of God,—what could be so disastrous to the spread and the influence of the gospel as the breaking up of the Union of these States? and what could be more favorable to the extension of religious knowledge and institutions, than the present united Government? Holding myself, therefore, as the minister of God, consecrated to the one work of preaching and extending the gospel and the church of God, I consider myself as directly engaged in my proper office, when, summoned by the civil authority to praise God for national blessings, I select out our UNION as the great all-embracing blessing under whose shelter, liberty, security, pros-

perity, the arts and sciences may spread and flourish, and with them, to consecrate and bless them all, the religion of the Savior. In every blessing which I have enumerated, I see a handmaid to the religion of my Savior. In the prevalence of just principles of human government, there is a preparation for the reception of the laws of God's moral administration. In the independence and security of the citizen, there is provision made for his attending, with an undiverted mind, to the messages of salvation. In general prosperity there is a removal of the necessity of a constant and crushing care to live, which leaves no leisure for serious and inquiring thought on the higher wants and duties of our immortal nature. In the diffusion of intelligence and the enlargement of mind, there is furnished a fit preparation for the presentation of that gospel which the most penetrating intelligence cannot fully fathom, and which the greatest mind must be made greater that it may receive. In the rapid spread of population over all the country, and in the facilities for speedy and wide communication, are furnished means for the running to and fro upon the earth, of the messages and ministers of salvation, whereby the knowledge of God shall be increased. Oh, what do those ministers of Jesus mean, who would break up this great Union, and thus close the avenues to the extension of the gospel, which God's providence is opening? I read in the oracles of God of a coming day, when "the kingdoms of this earth shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Would that even now, all the freedom, the education, the wealth, the activity, the improvements of the age—would that they were all baptized in the love of God, and consecrated to His glory, and devoted to His service! But if, when the servants of God look longingly forward from this evil time

and cry out, "Lord how long? Why tarry the wheels of Thy chariot?" If the answer of God, by his providence be, "*Not yet, not yet,*" then should they, while they ply every instrumentality of gospel influence, with new fervor, rejoice at the same time, to see the world's progress in liberty, intelligence, arts, prosperity, wealth, and power. I know that the time is coming when the world and all that it inherits, shall be laid at the feet of my Jehovah Jesus; and I would have the offering magnificent as man can make it. Let men speed the car, and stretch the whispering wire over every land and every sea, and build their cities and dig their gold. I know that the time is coming when they shall be given, with all their uses and all their powers, into the hands of Him "whose right it is to reign."

My friends and brethren, this Thanksgiving Day finds us all in the possession of many and inestimable blessings. Those of you, however, who are living only for time, heedless of eternity, have failed to receive the greatest of all God's gifts—the unspeakable gift of his own dear Son for your salvation. You will have no true cause for rejoicing—though you have for thanksgiving that the offer of salvation is not withdrawn—until you shall make your peace with God, through Jesus Christ, and receive all his providential gifts as included under the great gift of redeeming mercy.

For genial skies and abundant harvests; for a general prosperity, without example in the history of the country; for the absence of suffering for the necessities of life, and for the possession of the means of comfortable living among the laboring classes; for the opportunity of affording employment to the thousands of suffering emigrants upon our shores; for the increased efforts of the charitable, all over the land, to elevate the condition and relieve the wants of

the native and the foreign poor; for all these things we owe that devout thanksgiving which blends with praises for the past, new vows of service to God and our fellow creatures, for the future.

As a congregation, my brethren, we have great cause for thanksgiving. God has graciously given us prosperity and unity of feeling and affection, and has blessed us in our efforts to build a new house to His honor and glory. Let us prepare to enter into those courts with thanksgiving, and into that house with praise. Let us renew our consecration, and make our gratitude and devotion commensurate with our blessings.

As individuals you are greatly blessed. But little sickness, or sorrow, or bereavement, has invaded your households.

And remember that all your blessings have come to you and abide with you under the shelter of the Union of these States, in whose beating heart it is ours to live. Then let us join in spirit, with our brethren and countrymen all over the land, in praising God for these blessings, and in praying to Him that they never may be less.

Love the Union, for upon it hang the hopes of humanity and religion.

Cherish the Union. She is committed to our care. She was born in an hour of peril and of darkness. She was cradled on an open field of battle and of blood. Storms and tempests beat upon her unsheltered and homeless childhood. She grew up into benignant loveliness under no gentle nurture. For more than half a century she has been the guardian angel of the Republic. Cherish and love the UNION!

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